



SUCCESS STORY

Rehabilitation Gives Family New Life

Center assists families turn from chaotic homes to stable households



Photo: ARO

The Lada Municipal Social Welfare Center helps both children and parents develop the tools and skills they need to build a strong family.

A USAID-funded center focuses on a complete rehabilitation of the entire family, so that returning children can grow up in a safe, healthy household again.

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When specialists from the Lada Municipal Social Welfare Center first arrived at the Ponomarev family's home in the Chaiinskii district of Siberia's Tomsk Republic, they were horrified. The Ponomarev's four boys were dirty and sleeping on bare mattresses in a garbage-filled house. The parents, unemployed alcoholics who went on long drinking binges, left them to fend for themselves. The youngest, a disabled 4-year-old, could not speak, walk, or eat with utensils.

The Ponomarevs were furious when the specialists and Tomsk social services staff took the boys away from them to the center. The youngest child screamed day and night, and was sent to a specialized rehabilitation center for disabled children. The other three boys stayed at Lada, where their aggressive behavior made the staff's job even more difficult.

The center's family rehabilitation program was founded in order to respond to a typical problem for social services: after children undergo successful social, psychological, and medical rehabilitation in a shelter, they return home to families that haven't changed. Many rehabilitated children quickly regress to previous behavior.

Working in conjunction with local social services specialists, the center develops a complete family rehabilitation program for families in need. Parents agree to a list of goals they must achieve if they want to reunite with their children, and specialists monitor their progress and counsel them on ending their substance abuse.

Two months later, thanks to the center, the family made a dramatic recovery. The three older boys began to participate in center activities, playing and singing with the other children. As new children were admitted to the center, the Ponomarev boys became their unofficial guardians. The parents both stopped drinking and started focusing on creating a clean and comfortable home. The father found a job, and began planting a vegetable garden. The youngest boy returned from treatment able to walk, dress and feed himself. The Lada staff hardly recognized him as the boy they had found dirty and immobile. Eventually, the boys returned home to a new life.